2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK 6

C 581 584 or whom she only wants for a temporary lover. Above all she wants as a husband a man who treats her well and possesses the qualities necessary to support the future family. Since the Choroti to a great extent live by fishing, skill in this art is naturally reckoned among a man's most praiseworthy qualities. Importance is also attached to skill in gardening and hunting. Consequently, when a young man is courting a girl, he tries to gain her favour by presenting her with fish in abundance. I was told that when several men are courting the same girl — which naturally is often the case — the man who brought her the largest quantities of fish had the greatest chance of gaining preference.

C. 581 593 Thus among the Choroti, marriage is from a man's point of view an important matter. When the parents send out their young son to take part in the dances and to find a wife, they follow his undertaking with the keenest interest. Every evening the father shakes his magical rattle gourd (*pelīte*) in order to promote his son's enterprise and »hurry on» the girls on his behalf. When the rattle gourd is used for such practical purposes the ceremony is called *nekeńlitse símă*, which literally means: »to shake the rattle to get (or obtain) something».

C 585 Apart from these ceremonies in connection with courtship, there are no particular marriage rites, except the necessary drinking-bout which accompanies all family feasts and in which only the men take part. The young couple are without any further ceremony regarded as married, but marriage is not fully complete until a child is born.

M [171] [562] ●527 836 584 Among the *Mataco*, marriages are not particularly contracted in connection with the dances, but conditions are the same as among the Choroti in so far as the women play the active part both as concerns incidental amorous relations and marriages proper. The great drinking-feasts during the algaroba season are the occasions when a woman enters into temporary or permanent relation with a man. When the men are intoxicated, the girls avail themselves of the opportunity, seize the youths whom they like by the hands and take them to their houses where they spend the night with them. These liaisons lead in many cases to real marriages.

M 585 789 535 When marriage is agreed upon, it is celebrated with the usual ceremonies which have a religious significance. The drum, the most important magical instrument of the Mataco, is beaten the whole night with a view to keeping off evil spirits from the couple. Similarly, a ceremonial dance, called *Nahútsak*, is performed in the evening. It is a ring-dance much like the marriage dance *Avúshe* of the Choroti. The couple being married are seated in the middle of the ring and their friends dance and chant around

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 SI7 Mataco SI7

Mataco Marriage

By Niels Fock

This paper was written on a field trip to the Mataco, carried out under the auspices of the Fundación Williams, Argentina with support from the Danish State Research Foundation. I wish to express my hearty thanks to these institutions, and particular thanks to my professor, Dr. Kaj Birket-Smith, who has supported the expedition both scientifically and morally.

The Mataco Indians inhabit the western areas of the Argentine Chaco between the Rio Pilcomayo and the Rio Bermejo. They have for centuries been in contact with civilisation, but as a frontier tribe they seem to have built up a special traditionalism as a protective bulwark. Particularly the north-eastern Mataco at the central Pilcomayo have preserved their ancient traditions to this day, and the occupational system is still stamped by the collecting by women and the fishing of the men. The customs in connexion with marriage have to a large extent been retained unaffected to the present day, evincing many primitive features as, for example, the lack of any form of wedding ceremony. The contraction of marriage extends over a period dating from the girl's initiation until her first confinement.

The Mataco regard the initiation of girls as an introduction to marriage. This initiation consists in the girl's seclusion—or better—segregation from everyone apart from her mother. It comes as a prolongation of her first menstruation, and the long isolation is spent in continual work making *caraguatá* cord. It is considered very important that this work should be performed rapidly and well in order that an impression can be formed of the girl's ability as regards her main occupation in the future. As a rule the end of seclusion is marked by an *aleja* festival during which the girl looks around for a man. That same night she is able to take him with her to her home and allow him to sleep with her.

The girl being initiated is then called *anutsha;* sexually and economically she is now ready for marriage. Normally several years will pass during which the girl may well search for a husband, but the actual result of her efforts is a series of sexual relations that seldom endure beyond a few days. It is nearly always the girl who takes the initiative for these short term adventures. At the village dancing-place where every evening the young men dance in chains or rings, the girls also

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